Explaining the Meaning of

An-Nur (The Light)

One of Allaah's Names

Prepared by

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بسم ا الر ن الرحيم

In the Name of Allaah, ***Ar-Rahmaan Ar-Raheem,*** I begin to write:

إن ا مد ِ نحمده ونستع يهِ ونستغفِره، ونعوذُ با ِ من شرورِ أنفُسِنا وسيئاتِ أعمالِنا من يهدِهِ ا ُ فلا مضل له، ومن يضلِلْ فلا هادي له. وأشهد أن لا إله إلاّ ا ُ وحده لا شريك له. وأشهد أن محمداً عبده ورسولُه، صلى ا ُ عليهِ وعلى آلِهِ وصحبه وسلم.

All Praise is due to Allaah, we praise Him, and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allaah, Most High, from the evils of our own selves and from our wicked deeds. Whomever Allaah guides cannot be misguided, and whomever He leads astray cannot be guided. I testify that there is no true God worthy of being worshipped except Allaah, Alone, without partner or associate. I further testify that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger (ﷺ). May Allaah's *salaah* and *salaam* also be granted to the Prophet's pure family and to all of his noble companions.

يا أيها الذِين آمنوا اتقُوا الله حق تقاتِهِ ولا تموتن إلا وأنتم مسلِمونَ [آل عمران:١٠٢].

O you who believe! Fear Allaah [by doing all that He ordered and abstaining from all that He forbade] **as He should be feared** [obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always] **and die not except in a state of Islaam**. [TMQ[1], *aal-'Imraan* (3 102)].

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[1]TMQ: Translation of the meaning of the Qur'aan.

يا أيها الناس اتقُوا ربكُم الذِي خلَقَكُم مِن نفْسٍ واحِدةٍ وخلَق مِنها زوجها وبث مِنهما رِجالاً كَثِ أَ ونساءً واتقُوا الله الذِي تساءَلُونَ بِهِ والأَرحام إِن الله كَانَ علَيكُم رقِيباً [النساء:١].

O mankind! Be dutiful to your *Rabb* [Allaah], **Who created you from a single person** [Adam] **and from him** [Adam] **He created his wife** [Eve], **and from them both He created many men and women. And fear Allaah through Whom you demand your mutual** [rights] **and** [do not cut the relations of] **the wombs** [kinship]. **Surely, Allaah is ever an All-Watcher over you.** [TMQ, *an-Nisaa'* (4:1)].

يا أيها الذِين آمنوا اتقُوا الله وقُولُوا قَولاً سدِيداً * يصلِح لَكُم أعمالَكُم ويغفِر لَكُم ذُنوبكُم ومن يطِعِ الله ورسولَه فَقَد فَاز فَوزاً عظِيماً [الأحزاب: ٧٠-٧١].

O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allaah and fear Him, and speak [always] **the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allaah and His Messenger has indeed achieved a great success.** [TMQ ,*al-Ahzaab* (33:70-71)].

أما بعد/

فإن أصدق ا ديثِ كتاب ا ِ تعا ، وخ ا دي هدي مدٍ صلى ا عليه وعلى آله وصحبِهِ وسلم، وشر الأمورِ دثاتها، وكُل محدثَةٍ بِدعة وكُل بدعةٍ ضلالةٌ، وكُل ضلالَةٍ النار.

It proceeds that the most truthful speech is that of Allaah's Book [the Qur'aan] and that the best of guidance is that of Muhammad (ﷺ). The worst of evils are the *muhdathaat* (newly-invented matters [in the *deen*]), and every innovated matter (in the *deen*) is a *bid'ah*; every *bid'ah* is a *dalaalah* (misguidance), and every *dalaalah* is in the Fire of Hell."

Know, may Allaah's Mercy be upon me and you, that Knowing of Allaah by His Names and Attributes increases the faith in Him and the adherence to His commandments because, when established, this knowledge would enjoin the proper estimate of Allaah with the the believer. It is grave injustice on the part of some people who give high estimate to created beings while falling short in giving Allaah all the proper and most high estimate He deserves.

Also when we know that creation will come to an end, then it is improper and wrong to offer worship to something that will cease to exist. The worship of creation in one form or another is due to ignorance about the Qualities of Allaah, the Ever-Existing:

[ما لكم لا ترجون وقارا] (نوح: ١٣)

What is the matter with you, that you fear not Allaah (His punishment), and you hope not for reward from Allaah or you believe not in His Oneness. [TMQ; *Nooh* (71):13].

The believer, who properly estimates the Greatness of Allaah, will be guided to obey, fear, hope, and seek Him Alone. This estimation of Allaah fills the heart of the true believer such that he would not

introduce anyone before Allaah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). Therefore, the knowledge of Allaah entails that the Muslim resort only to Him, invoking Him by His Names and Attributes. That is why Allaah (ﷻ) says:

(الأعراف:١٨٠) الآية **[فادعوه بها سـ اء ا الأ و]**

"And (all**) the Most Beautiful Names Belong To Allaah, so call on Him by them."** [TMQ; *al-A'raaf* (7): 180].

One of the Great Names of Allaah is النور (An-Nur: The Light). It is one of the names of Allaah that are mentioned in conjunctive constructs (related names) and they are part of *al-Asmaa' Al-Husnaa*. For example, Allaah's Name *ar-Rabb* ("The Lord") always comes related to other words in the *ayaat* (verses) of the Qur'aan. We read in *soorat al-Faatihah*:

Rabbul 'Aalameen **{ رب العا }**

The *Rabb* of *al-'Aalameen* (mankind, jinns and all that exists):

***Ar-Rabb**: -*الـرب Allaah is the *Rabb*: He gives all things the power to grow, to move, and to change; and to Whom belongs the Creation and Commandment. The Master Who has no equal in His Soveignty, Predominance, and Highness. The One Who Provides, Sustains, Owns, Cherishes, Organizes all that existing. *Ar-Ruboobiyyah* is an infinitive noun of *Ar-Rabb*.

An-Nur

النور **An-Nur** (The Light)-*Soorat An-Nur (Qur'aan 24:35)*:

1-*An-Nur* is one of Allaah's Names as well one of His Attribute, derived from His *Nur* (Light) which is an Attribute established with His *Thaat* (Essence). Allaah, ﷻ, said:

[ا نور السمواتِ والأرض]

Allaah is the Light (*Nur*) **of the heavens and the earth**[2]...[TMQ; *An-Nur* (24):35]

The Prophet ﷺ used to invoke Allaah ﷻ upon starting the night prayers (*Tahajjud*):

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[2]In this *Aayah's* construct, Allaah's *Nur* is related (*mudaaf*) to *As-Samaawati wal Ard* (the heavens and the earth). Some had interpreted this *aayah* such that Allaah ﷻ, is the One Who illuminates (*Munawwir*) the heavens and the earth and guides their inhabitants. This is from His Actions, otherwise it does not preclude the fact that the *Nur*, which is one of His Attributes, is established with Him. It is common for the *Salaf* ر هـم ا تعـا, may Allaah's Mercy be upon them, to mention all or some of the meanings of the attributes pertraining to Allaah's Names. By mentioning some of the meanings they do not negate the other affirmed qualities of such names. As such, one of the meanings signified by Allaah being "*An-Nur* of the heavens and the earth" is that He has illuminated the heavens and the earth and guided their inhabitants by His Light. The saying that meaning is restricted to His illumination of the heavens and the earth by certain planets (sun, moon, stars), is wrong, because the illumination by their light does not cover the entire universe. [See Ibn Taymeeyah's *al-Fatawaa*, 6: 390-393].

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"..لك ا مد أنت نور السماوات والأرض.." - متفق عليه

"*All Praise is due to You; You are the **Light** of the heavens and the earth...*"[3]

2- "The texts from the Qur'aan and authentic *Sunnah* relate *An-Nur* to Allaah, according to the following angles:

The First Angel:

a. That Allaah ﷻ has a *Nur* related (*gr*. conjugated) to Him as an Attribute of His *Thaat* [Essense], the same as His other Attributes of Life, Sight, Knowledge, Might, and so forth. Allaah, Most Majestic and Most Magnificent, says:

[وأشرقَتِ الأرض بنور ربـها]

And the earth will shine with the Light of its *Rabb* (Allaah–when He will come on the Day of Resurrection to judge among men)...[TMQ; *Az-Zumar* (39): 69].

And if the earth will shine with His Light, then He ﷻ is a *Nur* (Light) as stated by His Messenger, Muhammad ﷺ: "**You** are the Light of the heavens and the earth..."[4]

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[3]For a full text of the Prophet's invocation see *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari* (English/Arabic), V.9, Hadeeth *# 482.*

[4]Grammatically, the "Light" which is related (annexed) to Allaah in the construct of the *Aayah* (which means): "**And the earth will shine with the**

b. That *An-Nur* relates to His most Honorable and Majestic Face. 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud ﷺ said:

"نور السماوات والأرض من نور وجهه"

"*The light of the heavens and the earth is from the Light of His Face*."[5]

Light of its *Rabb*..." is **not** an annexation denoting possession, creation, honor, or preferment as it is the case in many *aayaat* (Verses) of the Noble Qur'aan including:

a. *Baytee* (My house), mentioned in the *aayah* (which means): **That they** (Ibraaheem and Ismaa'eel) **may purify *Baytee*** (My house, i.e *the Ka'bah*) **for those who circel it, or stay** (in *I'tikaaf*), **or bow, or prostrate themselves** (near it, in prayer)." (TMQ 2:125)

b. *Naaqatullaah* (Allaah's She-Camel) mentioned in Allaah's Saying (which means): "**This *Naaqatullaah*** (She-Camel of Allaah) **is sent to you** (Prophet Saalih's people, Thamood) **as a sign. So allow it to graze in Allaah's earth**."(TMQ 7:73).

[5]Reported by at-Tabaraani (*Mu'jam At-Tabaraani*, V.9, # 8886), ad-Daarimiye in *ar-Rad 'alaa Bishr al-Mareesi* (p.449), and al-Haythami in *Majma'uz-Zawaa'id* (V.1, p.85). Amongst its narrators, is Abu 'Abdis-Salaam Az-Zubayr. Ibn Abee Haatim and Ibn Ma'een did not mention anything regarding the *haal* (status) of this narrator i.e. whether he is *da'eef* (weak), or *thiqah* (trustworthy transmittor), or otherwise. Ibn Hibbaan, however, mentioned him in his book *ath-Thiqaat* (The Trustworthy (men of Hadeeth). Al-Haythami realted that Abu Haatim (i.e. Ar-Raazi) described Abu 'Abdis-Salaam Azubayr as *majhool* (unknown). Shayekhul Islaam Ibn Taymeeyah reported this narration and said: "It is affirmed upon the authority of Ibn Mas'oud ﷺ." (See *Majmoo' al-Fataawaa,* V.6, p.391). He also mentioned it in V.2, p.189 of the same reference. And Allaah knows best.

c. Allaah's *Nur* is also related (*mudaaf*) to the heavens and the earth as in His ﷻ saying:

[ا نور السمواتِ والأرض]

Allaah is the Light (*Nur*) **of the heavens and the earth** ...[TMQ; *An-Nur* (24): 35].[6]

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[6]There is no contradiction between the interpreation that this *aayah* means that Allaah, Most High, is the *Munawwir* of the heavens and the earth and between the saying of 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud in which the *Nur* is related to Allaah's *Thaat*. The interpretation that Allaah is the *Munawwir* (The One Who Illuminates) or *Haadi* (The One Who Guides) the heavens and the earth is true because it relates the act (verb) of *Tanweer* (Illumination) to the active "subject" i.e. Allaah, the Most Magnificent. There is no contradiction whether one says that Allaah is the *Nur* of the heavens and the earth *bi-Thaatihi* (by Himself) or *bi-Fi'lihi* (by His Act). Imaam Ibnul Qayyim تعا ا ه ر said: "The truth is that Allaah is the *Nur* of the heavens and the earth taking into consideration all of the interpretations." Being the *Munnawwir* and the *Haadi*, does not negate the fact that He ﷻ, Himself, is *Nur*. Those who negate Allaah's Attribute of *An-Nur* erred by thinking that if they would affirm the Attribute of *An-Nur* it would mean that Allaah is the light falling upon walls and gardens, etc.! The fact however is that the created light is an effect of the Attribute of *An-Nur*. We know that *Ar-Rahmah* (Mercy) is an Attribute of Allaah established with Him ﷻ. The *rahmah* (mercy) present on earth is an effect of Allaah's Attribute of *Ar-Rahmah* separted from Him ﷻ. The knowledge of the creature is a distinct and separate effect of Allaah's Attribute of Knowledge. The saying of 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud ﷺ does not mean or imply that the light on walls and on the surface of the earth is the essence of the Light of Allaah's most honourable Face. [See Ibnul-Qayyim, *Mukhtasar as-Sawaa'iq al-Mursalah 'alal-Jahmiyyah al-Mu'attilah*, checked by Ridwaan Shaakir Ridwaan (Makkah and Riyadh: Saudi Arabia, Maktabat Nizaar Al-Baaz), pp. 547-548 and *Ijtimaa' al-Ju-youoshil-Islaamiyyah,* 'Awaad

d. Light is Allaah's *Hijaab* (Veil). The Prophet ﷺ said: "**Light is His *Hijaab,* If He uncovers it then the *subuhaat* (**brightness, splendour, majesty, and greatness) **of His Face would burn His creation so far as His Sight reaches."**[7]

'Abdullaah Al-Mi'tiq, ed. (Riyadh: Saudi Arabia, Maktabat Ar-Rushd, 1415/1995], pp.45-46.

[7]In another narration instead of the word "light" it is fire, due to the doubt of the narrator Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. Reported by Muslim (*Saheeh Muslim* - English translation, V.1, Hadeeth # 343), Ahmad (4:405) and others. Both narrations stating the "light" and "fire" are in *Saheeh Muslim*.

The pure "fire" which Allaah mentioned in the Qur'aan when He ﷻ spoke to Musa ﵇ (Qur'aan 27:7-8) is also called a light and it is a light which illuminates without burning. Allaah also called the fire of the lamp a light (Qur'aan 24:35), contrary to the dark fire of Hell which is not called a light. Therefore, the doubt of the narrator between the words "light" and "fire" does not prevent [from affirming] that the "Light" is His *Hijaab*. [See Shayekhul-Islaam Ibn Taymeeyah's *Fataawaa*, V.6, pp.384-386 and Ibnul Qayyim's *Mukhtasar as-Sawaa'iq al-Mursalah*, p.551. Shayekhul Islaam said: **"There are three kinds of** (created light)**: The first is characterized by *Isharaaq bila Ihraaq*** (illumination but without burning) **and this is the "pure" light like that of the moon. The second kind burns without illumination and this is the dark fire (a black burning fire). The third being a light and a fire, like the sun. Also the fire of the lamps in this world is described by being being both** (a light and a fire)...**"** Imaam Ibnul Qayyim added "This is the case with the created and witnessed lights. The *Hijaab* of *ar-Rabb* (Allaah), Most Blessed and Most High, is a *Nur* (Light) and it is a Fire. All of the [three] kinds of the created lights are real relative to their proper classifications...And if the light of His creation, like that of the sun, the moon, and fire, are real, then how could His Light be not real? The Light of His Face is real too [and fits His Majesty] and it is not figurative." *Ibid*, pp.551-552 (with a slight adaptation).

The cases of the aforementioned angle represent situations in which the *sifah* (attribute) of *An-Nur* has been related to its *mawsoof* (what is being described) as Imaam Ibnul Qayyim رحمه الله تعالى classified them.[8]

The Second Angle:

The second angle is the *idaafah* (relating) of the *maf'uool* (object) to its *faa'il* (active subject). Ibnul Qayyim said: "This is mentioned in the saying of Allaah, Most High:

[الله نور السماواتِ والأرض مثَلُ نورِهِ كَمِشكَاةٍ فِيها مِصباح الْمِصباح فِي زجاجةٍ الزجاجةُ كأنها كوكب دري يوقَد مِن شجرةٍ مباركةٍ زيتونةٍ لا شرقيةٍ ولا غربيةٍ يكاد زيتها يضِيءُ ولو لم تمسسه نار نور على نورٍ يهدِي الله لِنورِهِ من يشاءُ ويضرب الله الأمثَالَ لِلناس والله بِكُل شيءٍ علِيم] [النور، ٣٥].

The parable of His Light is as (if there were) **a niche and within it is a lamp, and the lamp is in glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east[9] nor of the west[10], whose oil would almost glow forth** (of itself), **though no fire touched it. Light upon Light! Allaah guides to His Light whom he wills. And Allaah sets parables for**

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[8]Ibnul Qayyim in *Ijtimaa' al-Juyoushil-Islaamiyyah*, pp.45-54.

[9]It does not get sun-rays only in the morning.

[10]Nor it gets sun-rays only in the afternoon, but it is exposed to the sun all day long.

mankind, and Allaah is the All-Knower of everything." [TMQ; *An-Nur* (24): 35]

It means: The parable of Allaah's Light in the heart of his believing slave. The one having the greatest share of this Light is His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ. This Light relates to Allaah تعـا being the One who grants and bestows it upon His slave. It is also related to the slave since he is its place (*mahalluhu*) and favorable recipient (*qaabiluhu*).This light has a:

1-*faa'il* (active subject),
2-*qaabil* (recipient),
3-*mahal* (place),
4-*haamil* (carrier), and
5-and *maadah* (substance).

The *aayah* above comprises all of these mattters in detail:

The *faa'il* (One Who does this) is Allaah, Most High, the One Who makes the lights to abound, Who guides to His Light whom He Wills.

The favorable recipient (*al-qaabil*) is the believing slave.

The place of reception (*mahal al-qubool*) is the believer's heart.

The *haamil* (carrier) is his motivation, determination, and will.

The *maadah* (substance) is his sayings and actions."[11]

"The light which Allaah puts in the heart of the submitting Muslim is faith in Him, knowledge and love of Him, and remembrance of Him. It is His light (the Qur'aan) which He brought down, the origin of which is in the hearts of the Muslims. Its substance strengthens and increases until it appears on their faces, their limbs and their bodies, even on their clothes and in their homes. On the Day of Resurrection, this light emerges and **runs forward before them**[12] amidst the darkness of the Bridge (*Siraat*)[13] until they cross over it. The (intensity) of their lights on the Bridge will correspond to the intensity (strong or weak) of the repective lights in their hearts in the *dunya* (this life).

The similitude of this Light and its place, its carrier, and its substance **is as the niche** which is like the chest [of the believer]. Inside the niche there is a glass, from the most crisp and clear kind. [In the *aayah*] it is even made to resemble brilliant star in its clarity and purity. **This glass resembles the heart** [*al-mahal*]. The similitude to the glass is because it embodies qualities present in the

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[11]Ibnul Qayyim in *Ijtimaa' al-Ju-yoush al-Islaamiyyah*, pp.45-54.

[12]Allaah ﷻ Says: {نـورهم يـسعى بـ أيـديهم} (The believer's) **Light will run forward before them.** (Qur'aan 66:8)

[13]*Siraat*: The Bridge over the midst of Hell; It is extremely slippery; On it there are hooks, claws, and bars; Over it mankind will pass. The believers, as the Prophet ﷺ explained, "Will pass like the blink of an eye, like the lightning, like the wind, like the birds, and like the fast horses and camels. Some will be saved, some will be lacerated then set free, and some will be thrown into the Fire...". See *Saheeh Muslim*, V.1, Hadeeth # 352.

heart of the believer: clearity, smoothness, and firmness. It sees the truth by virtue of its clarity; kindness, mercy and affection originate from it because of its smoothness; it stands firm in holding to the truth and it makes *jihaad* against the enemies of Allaah, due to the firmness in its structure...

In contrast with this enlightened heart, there are two other opposing and blameworthy hearts. One of them is stone-like, harsh, merciless, it lacks beneficience, reverence, and the clarity by which it can see the truth. In fact it is as an ignorant and a tyrant heart; it is neither aware of Allaah (the Truth) nor it is mercifull to the creation. Opposite to it, is a weak, watery, neither firm nor strong heart,… and everything (good, evil, wicked, etc.) that mixes with it, affects it in its own way.

In the glass there is a lamp and it is the light (*an-nur*) that is in the wick. **The wick in the lamp is the light** carrier (*al-haamil*), and **the substance of the light is the olive oil**, extracted from the olives of a tree growing in the most suitable place by being exposed to the sun rays all day long. Its oil is from the purest of its kind, clear without turbidity, to the degree that it will almost glow forth of itself. Similar to the olive oil is the substance of the believing heart. It is from the "tree" of Revelation:[14] it is the greatest blessed thing

[14]What Allah reveals in His Books and (or) inspires to His Messengers. The strength of its "roots" in the heart of the believer depends upon His compliance with its content. That is why there is a variation amongst the degree of faith amongst Muslims. Some are stronger than others in their adherence to the teachings of Islam. There are the obedient and disobedient Muslims. Those who mixed the substance (*al-maadah*) with ways not condoned by Islam,

and most distant from deviation. It is intermediate and, indeed, it is the most just and best of all matters. It did not deviate like the deviation of Christanity and Judaism. In all things it is bound to a medium course between these two blameworthy extremes.

Since the clarity of this oil is so intense such that it almost glows by itself, and then upon mixing with fire its illumination as well as that of the fire's substance of light intensifes, **then this becomes light upon light.**

Something similar happens to the believer. His heart is lit such that he almost knows the truth by means of his *fitrah* and intellect. His heart, however, has no *maadah* (substance) within itself. But when the *maadah* of the *al-Wahy* (Revelation) touches his heart and the latter rejoices in its company, its light [of *fitrah*] increases by the light of *al-Wahy*. The light of *al-Wahy* adds up to that of *fitrah* and it becomes **a light upon light.** So, the believer would almost speak the truth even though he may have not heard an evidence. He later

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became corrupt, or were led astray. If they do not repent, and clean their hearts and follow the way of Revelation, they may subject themselves to the punishment of Allah, which may manifest itself in different ways on the individual and (or) the society levels.

When the way of uncontrolled lusts and desires takes over the heart of man, he will turn away from the Revelation and may choose for himself ways of "worship" or "religions" that ascribe best to his desires. The goal becomes the life of this world only, turning man to forget as to what occurs after death. He is overwhelmed by the "developments" taking place around him in all walks of life and wants to keep "on track"! Life turns to "drug stores" asking for "pills" to ease down the "rush", or to "therapeutic clinics" to "relief" the worry and the sad heart! Or to suicide! Sometimes taking other lives with him.

hears of the evidence to be identical to what has been attested to by his *fitrah*. Thus, it is being a light upon light. This is the status of the believer. He acknowledges the truth, in general, by means of his *fitrah*. He then hears of the textual proofs and [authentic] traditions presenting what he has acknowledged, but in details. His faith, therefore, stems from the attestation of *al-Wahy* and *fitrah*...”[15]

I ask Allaah, An-Nur, to enlighten my heart and yours, and to fill them with firm Eeemaan. He is the Most Generous, the Most Merciful.

Saleh As-Saleh
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[15] Ibnul Qayyim’s *al-Waabil as-Sayyib,* verified by Saleem al-Hilaali (Ad-Dammaam, Saudi Arabia, Daar Ibnul Jawzi, 1415/1994), pp.100-103.